

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 DOE-11 SOE-02 SSM-03 CIAE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 ACDA-12 MCE-00 AF-10
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FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3864
SECDEF WASHDC//ISA/DSAA// PRIORITY
INFO DIA WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
COMIDEASTFOR

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LONDON FOR KINSOLVING
PARIS FOR MURPHY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, SA, YE
SUBJ: YAR MILITARY AID PROGRAMS

REF: SANAA 0482 (NOTAL)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: DURING REVIEW OF ARMS PROGRAM WITH US
DEFENSE ATTACHE, PRESIDENT/COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LTC AHMAD
AL-GHASHMI URGED THAT USG TO ALL POSSIBLE IN CONJUNCTION
WITH SAUDI ARABIA TO EXPEDITE MILITARY EQUIPMENT DELIVERIES
AND FILL GAPS IN YAR INVENTORIES BY SUPPLYING AIRCRAFT
AND TANKS. GHASHMI'S CONTINUING CONCERNS OVER YEMEN'S
DEFENSIVE CAPABILITIES SEEM EXACERBATED BY INTERNAL
PRESSURES WITHIN YEMEN ARMED FORCES AND BY FURTHER
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ETHIOPIAN GAINS OVER SOMALIA WHICH GHASHMI FEELS MAY
ULTIMATELY THREATEN BOTH YAR AND OTHER MODERATE REGIMES
IN RED SEA LITTORAL. END SUMMARY.

2. ON FEB 15 YAR ARMED FORCES DIRECTOR OF LOGISTICS
LTC MUHAMMAD AL-MUTARRIB CONTACTED US DEFENSE ATTACHE
(DATT) AND ASKED HIM TO MEET PRESIDENT GHASHMI THE

FOLLOWING DAY. MUTARRIB INDICATED THAT PRESIDENT WANTED TO TALK ABOUT ARMS DELIVERIES TO YEMEN IN CONTEXT OF CURRENT REGIONAL SECURITY ISSUES. REQUEST APPEARS TO HAVE RESULTED FROM PREVIOUS OFFERS BY AMBASSADOR TO ARRANGE BRIEFING FOR GHASHMI ON CURRENT STATUS OF OUR MGUITKBH AID PROGRAM FOR YEMEN.

3. DATT BEGAN INTERVIEW BY REVIEWING BROAD LINES OF YAR ARMED FORCES MODERNIZATION PROGRAM AND SUMMARIZING MILITARY DELIVERIES TO DATE. THERE FOLLOWED AN EXTENDED DISCUSSION OF FIVE CATEGORIES OF WEAPONS INCLUDED IN PRESENT PROGRAMS OR UNDER CONSIDERATION. HIGHLIGHTS OF DISCUSSION ON ARMS FOLLOW:

A. INFANTRY WEAPONS. DATT NOTED THAT .50 CALIBER MACHINE GUNS, 81MM MORTARS, AND LIGHT ANTITANK WEAPONS ARE EXPECTED TO ARRIVE IN YEMEN DURING PRESENT CALENDAR YEAR. GHASHMI EXPRESSED SATISFACTION.

B. FIELD ARTILLERY. AFTER REMINDING THE PRESIDENT THAT 24 105MM HOWITZERS ARE ALREADY IN COUNTRY, DATT EXPLAINED THAT REMAINING HOWITZERS ARE DUE IN APPROXIMATELY TWO YEARS. GHASHMI REPLIED THAT THESE HOWITZERS ARE NEEDED SOONER TO PROVIDE ESSENTIAL FIRE SUPPORT TO UNITS UNDERGOING REORGANIZATION. HE ASKED DATT TO CONVEY HIS CONCERN TO USG BUT DID NOT MAKE A SPECIFIC REQUEST FOR EXPEDITED DELIVERY.

C. AIR DEFENSE. GHASHMI EXPRESSED SPECIAL INTEREST
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IN DELIVERY SCHEDULE FOR VULCAN ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS AND METHOD OF TRAINING ENVISIONED. DATT EXPLAINED THAT IN CONJUNCTION WITH SAUDI ARABIA WE ARE ARRANGING FOR A PRE-DEPLOYMENT TEAM TO VISIT YEMEN AND RECOMMEND SUITABLE TRAINING PROGRAM TOGETHER WITH PROCEDURES FOR OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THIS SYSTEM. DATT WENT ON TO SAY THAT WHILE ORIGINAL SCHEDULE CALLED FOR DELIVERIES BEGINNING IN DECEMBER 1978, SOME ACCELERATION MAY BE POSSIBLE. DATT EMPHASIZED THAT ANY ADJUSTMENT IN DELIVERY DATES WILL DEPEND UPON FINDINGS OF PRE-DEPLOYMENT TEAM AND OTHER LOGISTICAL CONSTRAINTS. GHASHMI SAID TEAM IS WELCOME BUT ASKED FOR EARLIEST POSSIBLE DELIVERY OF VULCANS IN VIEW OF VULNERABILITY OF YAR FORCES TO SUPERIOR AIR CAPABILITIES OF PDRY AND ETHIOPIA.

D. FIGHTER AIRCRAFT. CONTINUING FROM PRECEDING STATEMENT, PRESIDENT ASKED WHAT WAS LATEST POSITION ON FIGHTERS FOR YAR AIR FORCE. DATT SAID USG IS SYMPATHETIC TO YEMEN'S NEED TO ACQUIRE MORE MODERN FIGHTER AIRCRAFT AND EXPLAINED THAT MATTER IS APPARENTLY UNDER DISCUSSION IN SAUDI ARABIA. DATT NOTED THAT CHIEF OF SAUDI MILITARY MISSION TO YEMEN, COL JAMIL SHOWAIL,

IS CURRENTLY IN RIYADH, PRESUMABLY TO REVIEW DETAILS OF YEMEN PROGRAMS, AND GHASHMI EXPRESSED HOPE THAT EARLY DECISIONS ON AIRCRAFT WILL BE FORTHCOMING IN WAKE OF THESE DISCUSSIONS.

E. ARMOR. AS HE HAS DONE MANY TIMES BEFORE, PRESIDENT REITERATED HIS DISAPPOINTMENT WITH SCOPE OF ARMOR PROCUREMENT. "WE ARE RECEIVING NOTHING BUT SMALL FRENCH PANHARD ARMORED CARS AND PERSONNEL CARRIERS," HE SAID. DATT INQUIRED ABOUT EXISTENCE OF ANY LARGER FRENCH ARMS DEALS TO INCLUDE TANKS, AND GHASHMI REPLIED THAT THERE ARE NONE. IN ANY CASE, HE WANTS US TANKS. DATT REVIEWED HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTENTS OF THE ARMS PLAN (INFANTRY WEAPONS, ARTILLERY, AND WHEELED VEHICLES FROM US; ARMORED CARS AND COMMUNICATIONS EQUIP-
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MENT FROM FRANCE), AND EXPRESSED VIEW THAT INCLUSION OF TANKS WOULD CONSTITUTE A BASIC PROGRAM CHANGE REQUIRING APPROVAL AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF THE SAUDI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND AVIATION. GHASHMI REPLIED THAT HE INTENDS TO PURSUE THIS MATTER WITH LT. GENERAL KABBANI (DIRECTOR OF SAUDI DEPARTMENT OF ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION) AND POSSIBLY WITH PRINCE SULTAN.

4. AS HE HAD EARLIER WITH AMBASSADOR ON JAN. 30, PRESIDENT THEN BROUGHT UP DETERIORATING SITUATION OF SOMALI ARMED FORCES AND CONTINUING MASSIVE SOVIET AND CUBAN SUPPORT TO ETHIOPIA AND SOUTH YEMEN. HIS ASSESSMENT WAS UNIFORMLY PESSIMISTIC: CONTINUING INFLUX OF ARMS AND SOVIET/CUBAN ADVISORS INTO BOTH COUNTRIES, NO EFFECTIVE EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE FOR SOMALIA (HE SAYS SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN ARE ONLY PROVIDING MORAL SUPPORT BUT NOTHING TANGIBLE), AND INCREASING POSSIBILITY OF COUP AGAINST PRESIDENT SIAD BARRE. HE OPINED THAT SITUATION DEVELOPING IN SOUTHERN ARABIA AND HORN OF AFRICA WILL INEVITABLY THREATEN MODERATE POSITION OF YEMEN AND OTHER RED SEA STATES AND URGED PROMPT ACTION BY US AND SAUDI ARABIA TO STRENGTHEN YAR DEFENSIVE POSTURE.

5. IN CONCLUSION, PRESIDENT GHASHMI ASKED DATT TO INFORM HIM OF ANY DEVELOPMENTS IN ARMS PROGRAM THROUGH CHIEF LOGISTICIAN LTC MUTARRIB. DATT ASKED IF THE PRESIDENT PREFERRED THIS CHANNEL TO THE USUAL ONES, NAMELY, CHIEF OF STAFF LTC ALI SHAYBA OR DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF LTC MUHAMMAD AL-ANISI. GHASHMI RESPONDED WITH REVEALING COMMENTS ABOUT HIS TWO CHIEF LIEUTENANTS: "MUTARRIB IS MORE TRUSTWORTHY THAN THOSE TWO," HE SAID. "SHAYBA IS A NICE GUY BUT STILL LEANS TOWARD THE RUSSIANS. ANISI IS A MERE ADMINISTRATIVE EMPLOYEE. YOU SHOULD
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TALK TO MUTARRIB ABOUT ARMS OR ANY OTHER IMPORTANT
MILITARY MATTERS YOU WANT TO BRING TO MY ATTENTION."

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

IO-13 ACDA-12 MCE-00 AF-10 /106 W

-----100497 190921Z /20

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FM AMEMBASSY SANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3865

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USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

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6. COMMENTS: PRESIDENT GHASHMI IS CLEARLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSITION OF HIS REGIME IN CONTEXT OF REGIONAL AND INTERNAL AFFAIRS. WHILE THERE WAS NO REAL ESCALATION OF PRESSURE ON USG TO EXPEDITE OR EXPAND ARMS SHIPMENTS, WE NOTE THAT STEADY PRESSURE TOWARD THIS END HAS CONTINUED THROUGHOUT PAST YEAR AND RECENTLY BOTH GHASHMI AND THE LOCAL SAUDI MISSION CHIEF HAVE BEEN PROBING POSSIBILITY OF EARLY DELIVERY OF SPECIFIC ITEMS, NOTABLY VULCAN (SUCH AS PRESIDENT'S RECENT DEMARCHE TO AMBASSADOR REPORTED IN REFTEL).

7. WE THINK GHASHMI'S CONCERNS HAVE BEEN EXACERBATED BY RECENT DEVELOPMENTS BOTH IN YEMEN AND IN THE LOWER RED SEA LITTORAL. ON ONE HAND, CONTINUING LOCAL UNREST AND PRESSURES FROM WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES HAVE PROBABLY IMPELLED GHASHMI TO SEEK EARLY AND TANGIBLE EVIDENCE

OF WESTERN AND SAUDI MILITARY SUPPORT. AS A FORMER TANK
COMMANDER, GHASHMI HAS NEVER BEEN HAPPY WITH THE SAUDI
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DECISION TO LIMIT NEW ARMOR PROCUREMENT TO FRENCH
PANHARDS AND PERSONNEL CARRIERS, AND HE IS INCREASINGLY
CONCERNED OVER YEMEN'S CONTINUING INFERIORITY IN
COMBAT AIRCRAFT AND VIRTUAL ABSENCE OF AIR DEFENSE. IN
THIS CONNECTION, HIS COMMENTS ON RESIDUAL PRO-SOVIET
TENDENCIES OF HIS CHIEF OF STAFF (WHO INCIDENTALLY IS
A FORMER YAR AIR FORCE COMMANDER) MAY REFLECT FURTHER
CARPING AT GHASHMI FROM ARMED FORCES ELEMENTS DIS-
SATISFIED AT WHAT THEY CONSIDER THE SLOW PACE AND LIMITED
SCOPE OF THE SAUDI-SPONSORED MODERNIZATION PLAN.

8. ON THE EXTERNAL SIDE, SOMALI REVERSES HAVE DEEPLY
WORRIED GHASHMI. HE FEARS, PROBABLY CORRECTLY, THAT
DEFEAT OF SOMALIA AND COLLAPSE OF PRESIDENT SIAD BARRE'S
REGIME MAY EMBOLDEN THE USSR, ETHIOPIA, AND PDY TO
EXERT NEW PRESSURE ON YAR. (FONMIN ASNAJ RECENTLY EX-
PRESSED SIMILAR FEAR TO AMBASSADOR.) GHASHMI FEARS THAT
HIS ARMED FORCES WOULD BE IN A HIGHLY VULNERABLE SITUATION
SHOULD THIS OCCUR. OVER AND ABOVE HIS CONCERNS ABOUT
YEMEN, GHASHMI'S FEARS OF AN IDEOLOGICAL MOMENTUM
THREATENING OTHER RED SEA STATES ALSO SEEM VALID IN
CONTEXT OF CONTINUING SOVIET EFFORTS AIMED AGAINST REGIONAL
POLICIES OF SUDAN, EGYPT, AND SAUDI ARABIA.

9. WE BELIEVE THAT EARLY SAUDI DECISIONS ON FIGHTER AIR-
CRAFT FOR YEMEN AND PROMPT DISPATCH OF OUR OWN VULCAN PRE-
DEPLOYMENT TEAM WOULD BE USEFUL STEPS IN VIEW OF INCREASINGLY
UNCERTAIN SITUATION IN THIS AREA. WE MUST DEFER TO SAUDI
THINKING ON THE LONG-FESTERING QUESTION OF TANKS FOR
YEMEN. AT SAME TIME, IF SULTAN AND GHASHMI DO IN FACT
COME TO MEETING OF MINDS ON TANKS, WE BELIEVE CURRENT
POLITICAL AND MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN YEMEN AND
NEIGHBORING STATES ARGUE FOR A POSITIVE RESPONSE BY
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USG IF ASKED TO SELL THEM.

10. THIS MSG WAS DRAFTED BY DATT; APPROVED BY AMBASSADOR.
SCOTES

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Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: YAR MILITARY AID PROGRAMS
TAGS: MASS, SA, YE
To: STATE DOD
Type: TE
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